

ST. DOMINGO.

Vice Admiral Porter on the Resources, Beauties, and Advantages of the Island.

HIS VISIT THERE IN 1846.

The Political Condition and Manners of the Dominicans and Haytians Nearly a Quarter of a Century Ago.

In 1846 Lieutenant (now Vice Admiral) David D. Porter made an extended tour of St. Domingo and Hayti, under directions of the then Secretary of the Navy, George Bancroft, with a view to obtaining reliable information regarding the political condition, manners of the people and resources of the country, which, comparatively speaking, were at that time almost unknown in the United States. Porter kept a highly interesting journal of his travels, and doing which, no doubt, would be invaluable at this time, when there is such a desire to learn all about the people and resources of that country, but, unfortunately, the Porter journal was assassinated by some of the rebel conspirators from the State Department, where it had been deposited, and has never since been restored. The object of the rebels in thus taking away with them the Porter journal is explained by the theory that they contemplated seizing some of the West India islands, and rightly calculated that the information gathered by Porter would be of the greatest utility. Lieutenant Porter, however, during the course of his travels in Dominica and Hayti sent several despatches to Secretary Bancroft, describing as considerable length those countries and their peoples. These despatches have been preserved, and as they cannot fail to be interesting at this time, I forward you copies of some of the more important. Following are the principal letters written by Porter to Secretary Bancroft:

WASHINGTON CITY,

Sun.—I have the honor to lay before you the report of my proceedings while on the island of St. Domingo, as the agents of the government was to obtain accurate information respecting the people belonging to the new republic of Dominica I have made my journal to the government. The Executive Agent, Captain President Minister of Justice and Public Prosecutor; Ricardo Muira, Minister of Finance; Joaquin Puello, Minister of the interior and Foreign.

A general description would convey but a faint idea of the manners and customs of a nation and if I have incorrect some little recurrences that appear of its importance, it was or the reverse, I can assure you.

As you possess a copy of my journal, I will not detail this report in an uninteresting language, but will avail myself of your desire to supply my instructions. Owing to my being subordinate to another officer while on the island, many interesting statistics were not obtained, and I can only give you a general sketch of what I saw.

The government of Spain kept a fleet cruising somewhere on the coast, or near the island, and do not appear to assist the Dominicans in case they are invaded by their neighbors, but there is no greater barrier against eventual invasion than the latter are too busily engaged fighting among themselves, and the great discontents they have received from this party when their means were not nearly so great as at present, will prevent any invasion.

I will conclude this despatch, sir, by giving you the names and positions of those who administer the government, and hope before I go to obtain a political history of them and the reasons that caused their removal in favor of the present.

On the 1st instant I received a communication from the Minister of War; Manuel Valencia, Minister of Justice and Public Prosecutor; Ricardo Muira, Minister of Finance; Joaquin Puello, Minister of the interior and Foreign.

A general agent is very much needed at this point, and I, I might, at other points, on the island. Forty or more American vessels visit the port during the year, and the commerce is increasing. Questions sometimes arise out of small matter between the two countries, and the government is evidently tending to unite and win, in the course of time, if not pure, nearly so. I think they contain within themselves all the elements requisite to a successful revolution.

It would be useful to me to have a general agent, who would be up to the usage of men in the condition, or that they are capable of attaining, at present a state of affairs, not brought about by themselves, nor with whom they are struggling to extricate the nation, and numerous evidences before the superior condition of our cause, the government not being very exacting, and, in many cases, acting with integrity.

As relates to the acknowledgment of the independence of the dominican, many interesting considerations present themselves in favor of recognizing it, and the government, on my arrival, did not receive any information from other sources as to any one's observation. We found the dominican flag flying here, this being the capital of that republic, and after the customary salutes were exchanged I accompanied Lieutenant Commandant R. C. Moore, and Lieutenant G. W. Smith, to the Consul General, who received us with all due honors and expressed much pleasure at the arrival of an American vessel, and a desire to furnish any information that might favor the views of the United States government.

GEORGE BANCROFT, Secretary of the Navy.

Lieutenant United States Navy.

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